

# EAP NEWSLETTER

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Human Behavior Associates, LLC

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## ***Tips for parents who are worried about drugs***

**1. Look for signs of deterioration in school or social functioning.** Have your child's grades or interest in school declined? Are they no longer interested in sports, music lessons or activities that were once enjoyable? A drop in grades, unexplained absences and discipline problems could be caused by substance abuse.

**2. Look for signs of depression.** Depression is common in adolescents. In fact, suicide is the leading cause of death for American teenagers. If you suspect your child is suffering from depression, seek help immediately.

**3. Be attentive.** Coping with adolescence is a stressful and confusing time for your child. Be a good listener and remember that anger is a potent inhibitor to good communication. Talking with a teen is more effective than yelling.

**4. Provide factual information on the risks of drug use.** Teens who contemplate drug use often believe they are invincible. Talk frankly with them about the dangers of drug and alcohol abuse. Ask your family physician or school counselor for information.

**5. Be a good role model.** Children learn from example. Parents should avoid alcohol abuse and drug use if they expect their children to do the same. The teens most likely to abuse drugs and alcohol live in homes where the parents have drug and/or alcohol problems. If you drink in moderation, be prepared to explain to your child the different standards for children and adults.

**5. Be aware of community resources.** Drug use affects all of us in the community and resources are available to help you. Ask your doctor, school counselor or EAP for referrals.

**6. Share your early experiences with drugs or alcohol.** Children like hearing that their parents are human. Talk to your child so they can learn from your experiences.

**7. Be understanding.** Talk to your child about why they are making certain choices. Don't condone drug or alcohol use, but show that you understand your child's unique pressures. Be supportive and show that you are committed to helping them get through this difficult time.

**8. Build self-esteem.** Stress your child's accomplishments and personal qualities. Even the most difficult teen has positive qualities. Don't miss an opportunity to point them out.

**9. Be loving.** Tell your child you love them, and show them. Give plenty of hugs and kisses, even to teens who pretend not to want affection. Look for activities your teens can enjoy and do them as a family.

## ***IS YOUR TEEN IN AN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP?***

We like to think of the teen years as happy times, when young people are forming their first romantic relationships. In reality, surveys report that 28% of teen relationships involve some form of violence. Battering is not just an adult problem, it also happens with teens. The public needs to become aware of the realities of relationship violence among young people. Teens are very vulnerable to peer pressure, sexual coercion and social status. The need to belong is strong at this age and teens are often confused about what is expected of them as adults.

Here are some warning signs of unhealthy relationships:

- Controlling what the other does or who they see or talk to. One person becomes the "property" of the other
- Frequent put-downs, criticism, or humiliation
- Excessive fighting, one person loses temper frequently
- Behavior or mood changes
- Lack of communication with family and friends, being unwilling to talk about the relationship
- Stalking, threats
- Blaming the other person for everything

Teen battering relationships can be isolating because adults often minimize the importance of teen relationships. Let your children know they can come to you for help and understanding. If you suspect your child is being abused, or is the abuser in a relationship, call your EAP for assistance. Help your child end damaging patterns in their lives and teach them how to make healthier choices in their relationships.

## Don't waste time on "small stuff"

According to Richard Carlson, the author of "Don't Sweat the Small Stuff", workers often handle big projects well, but often overreact to things that are relatively unimportant. Maybe you did twenty things at work today and nineteen of the tasks were successfully accomplished. It is the one thing that didn't go well that we talk about at dinner. People are overwhelmed and feel as if they don't have enough time in their workday to accomplish everything that needs to be done. Carlson suggests some tips for simplifying and streamlining your day and getting more enjoyment out of work.

**Avoid being a slave to the telephone.** Do you have trouble completing your tasks because you are constantly being interrupted by the phone? Consider setting aside some time each day when you simply don't answer your phone—let the caller leave a message on your voice mail or with a receptionist. This strategy can be applied to office visitors also—shut your office door for an hour or two and leave a note asking people to leave you a message or stop by at a designated time. You will be amazed at how much you accomplish when you don't have to constantly stop and start a task.

**Use voicemail effectively.** When you call someone, if your time is tight you are better off asking for their voice mail leaving a detailed message. Having conversations with clients and co-workers is important, but they frequently take at least ten minutes because of small talk. Usually your point can be communicated with a one-minute message on a voice mail.

**Schedule time for tasks.** Check your voice mail and e-mail two or three times a day rather than every hour. Set aside an hour strictly for returning calls or doing correspondence. Group your faxes and copies and make one trip a day to the fax or copy machine.

**Accept that someone will always be mad at you or disagree with you.** Workers today are spread so thin that they might not always be able to do as thorough a job as they want to. Do the best you can, and when things go wrong, understand that problems are a part of every job. Do your best to fix the mistake or problem and then let it go.

**Finish your tasks.** Many of us finish 99% of a project, and then we stop and take care of something else. That adds stress because we can't remove the item from our mental "to do" list. This is especially true when we have to do a task that we dislike

or find unpleasant, such as one involving a confrontation, discipline, or possible hurt feelings. Take care of these responsibilities immediately, so you avoid the stress that would be inevitable if you had postponed the confrontation.

**Get a life.** People who get burned out are often those who have nothing else in their lives but work. Problems on the job get magnified because they have nothing else to ease the stress. Spend time with friends and family, do some volunteer work, and take care of yourself by exercising and engaging in activities that you enjoy and that stimulate your creativity.

Take a look at your workday and see where you can take steps to relieve your stress. Have a long commute? Try reading if you take public transportation, or listen to books on tape or your favorite music if you drive. Can you adjust your day to come in from 7:00 to 4:00 rather than 8:00 to 5:00 if it helps you beat the traffic?

Another bad habit people get into is to maximize stress by mentally reliving bad experiences at work for days or weeks after the event. Others spend their time convincing themselves in advance that they are going to have a bad day, week, or month. What they are doing in both cases is "rehearsing unhappiness". Try rehearsing a positive experience instead. Or if you really do have a difficult project or schedule coming up, think about the steps you can take to prepare and organize yourself so you won't be so overwhelmed.

Others are bothered by things that are a predictable part of their work environment. Example: contractors who complain about building permits, government workers who complain about bureaucracy, customer service representatives who complain about angry customers. Why work yourself up over things that you have no control over, and that will always be part of your job? Work on making change and improvement where you can, and learn how to let the rest go.

No one would imply that work is always wonderful, and that the problems that people face at work (lay-offs, pay cuts, long hours) are not legitimate stresses. However, people do sometimes overdramatize deadlines and responsibilities, and take criticism too personally. Watch out for the tendency to give the negative parts of work far more importance than the positive ones.

HBA is your 24 hour employee assistance program. Eligible employees and family members may call for confidential assistance with personal, legal, childcare, financial, alcohol/drug and other problems. HBA has identified a wide variety of community resources and self help associations. Also available is a panel of professional counselors and hospitals who have agreed to provide free or low cost counseling and treatment services to persons who have been referred by Human Behavior Associates. Dial **1-800-937-7770** for information or assistance.